

The Categories of Plastics



Number 1 Plastics

PET or PETE (polyethylene terephthalate)

Found in: Soft drink, water and beer bottles; mouthwash bottles; peanut butter containers; salad dressing and vegetable oil containers; ovenable food trays.

Recycling: Yes, you can recycle Number 1 Plastics in Fresno!

Recycled into: Polar fleece, fiber, tote bags, furniture, carpet, paneling, straps, (occasionally) new containers

PET plastic is the most common for single-use bottled beverages, because it is inexpensive, lightweight and easy to recycle. It poses no risk of leaching harmful chemicals. Recycling rates remain relatively low (around 20%), though the material is in high demand by remanufacturers.



Number 2 Plastics

HDPE (high density polyethylene)

Found in: Milk jugs, juice bottles; bleach, detergent and household cleaner bottles; shampoo bottles; some trash and shopping bags; motor oil bottles; butter and yogurt tubs; cereal box liners

Recycling: Yes, you can recycle Number 2 Plastics in Fresno!

Recycled into: Laundry detergent bottles, oil bottles, pens, recycling containers, floor tile, drainage pipe, lumber, benches, doghouses, picnic tables, fencing
HDPE is a versatile plastic with many uses, especially for packaging. It poses no risk of leaching harmful chemicals. and is readily recyclable into many goods.



Number 3 Plastics

V (Vinyl) or PVC

Found in: Window cleaner and detergent bottles, shampoo bottles, cooking oil bottles, clear food packaging, wire jacketing, medical equipment, siding, windows, piping

Recycling: Yes, you can recycle Number 3 Plastics in Fresno!

Recycled into: Decks, paneling, mudflaps, roadway gutters, flooring, cables, speed bumps, mats.

PVC is tough and weathers well, so it is commonly used for piping, siding and similar applications. PVC contains chlorine, so its manufacture can release highly dangerous dioxins. If you must cook with PVC, don't let the plastic touch food. Also never burn PVC, because it releases toxins.

Do not use Number 3 plastic bottles for drinking water!

Why? Number 3 plastics may release toxic breakdown products (including phthalates) into food and drinks.

Harvard-educated Dr. Leo Trasande of the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine advises consumers to avoid number 3 plastics for food and drinks. The risk is highest when containers start wearing out, are put through the dishwasher or when they are heated (including microwaved). PVC manufacturing can release highly toxic dioxins into the environment, and the materials can off-gas toxic plasticizers into your home.



Number 4 Plastics

LDPE (low density polyethylene)

Found in: Squeezable bottles; bread, frozen food, dry cleaning and shopping bags; tote bags; clothing; furniture; carpet

Recycling: Yes, you can recycle Number 4 Plastics in Fresno!

Recycled into: Trash can liners and cans, compost bins, shipping envelopes, paneling, lumber, landscaping ties, floor tile

LDPE is a flexible plastic with many applications. It poses little to no risk of leaching harmful chemicals.



Number 5 Plastics

PP (polypropylene)

Found in: Some yogurt containers, syrup bottles, ketchup bottles, caps, straws, medicine bottles

Recycling: Yes, you can recycle Number 5 Plastics in Fresno!

Recycled into: Signal lights, battery cables, brooms, brushes, auto battery cases, ice scrapers, landscape borders, bicycle racks, rakes, bins, pallets, trays

Polypropylene has a high melting point, and so is often chosen for containers that must accept hot liquid. It poses little to no risk of leaching harmful chemicals.



Number 6 Plastics
PS (polystyrene)

Found in: Disposable plates and cups, meat trays, egg cartons, carry-out containers, aspirin bottles, compact disc cases

Recycling: Number 6 plastics cannot be recycled in Fresno.

Not Recyclable: Avoid using them as much as possible.

Do not use Number 6 plastic bottles for drinking water!

Why? Evidence suggests polystyrene can leach potential toxins into foods. Number 6 plastics can release potentially toxic breakdown products (including styrene). Get this: particularly when heated!



Number 7 Plastics
Miscellaneous

Found in: Three- and five-gallon water bottles, hard-rigid baby bottles, 'bullet-proof' materials, sunglasses, DVDs, iPod and computer cases, signs and displays, certain food containers, nylon

Recycling: Yes, you can recycle Number 7 Plastics in Fresno!

Recycled into: Plastic lumber, custom-made products

A wide variety of plastic resins that don't fit into the previous categories are lumped into number 7. A few are even made from plants (polyactide) and are compostable.

Do not use Number 7 plastic bottles for drinking water!

Why? Polycarbonate is number 7, and is a hard rigid plastic. Studies have shown polycarbonate can leach bisphenol A, a potential hormone disruptor, into liquids. According to Trasande, no level of bisphenol A exposure is known to be truly safe, and a government panel expressed 'some concern' that the ingredient causes neural and behavioral problems in children.